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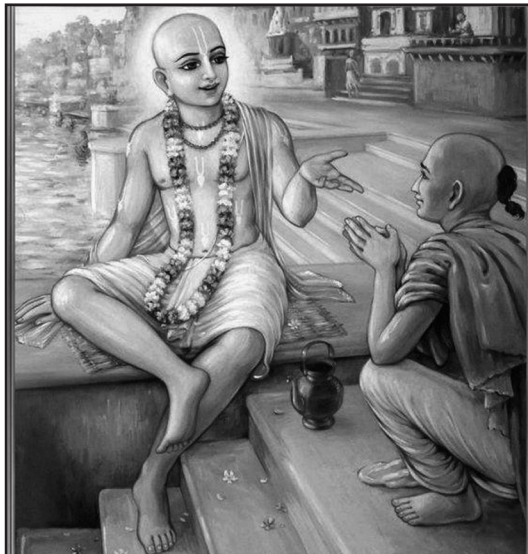
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Simply becoming an expert in the *Purāṇas* does not make one qualified to explain *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Śāstra* establishes that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is not understood by those possessing only an academic knowledge of scripture. To understand it requires devotion. A person who explains *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* must himself be a *bhāgavata*. If one desires wealth or fame from his recitation of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, then even though he becomes a renowned reciter, he will actually be far away from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from such a person, the people's hearts will not become attracted toward the Absolute, which is the goal of the *Bhāgavatam*.

—*AmṛtaVāṇī: Nectar of Instructions of Immortality* by

His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta SarasvatīṬhākuraPrabhupāda

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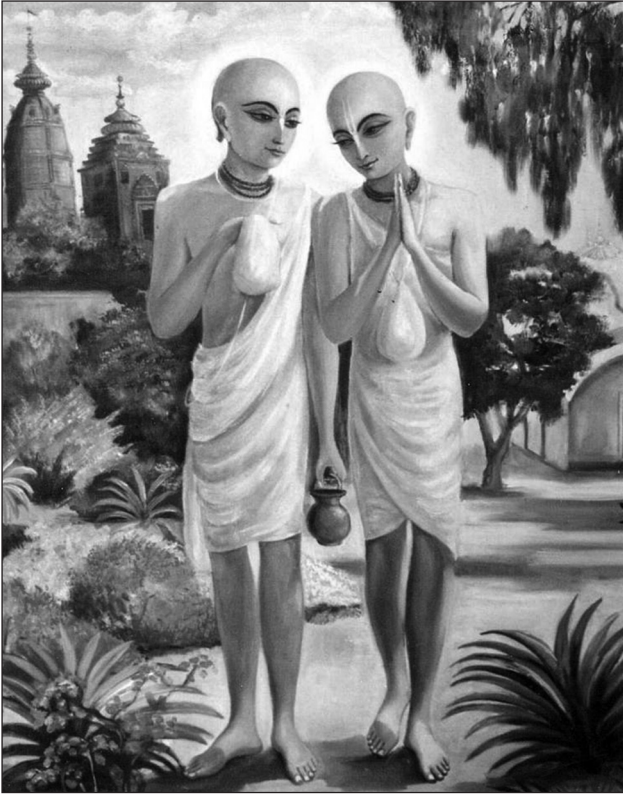
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### THE IMMORTAL HIDDEN NECTAR

*Sanatana Goswami*

During the seven days in which Parikhit Maharaja had prepared for death, Sukadeva Goswami had spoken only *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. But because *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is the sum and substance of all bhakti scriptures, those scriptures revealed their conclusions during the discussion. The *Bhāgavatam* spoken by Sri Sukadeva is all-beautiful, both in text and in purport. Nothing in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is superfluous:

*nigama-kalpataror galitaṁ phalaṁ  
śuka-mukhād amṛta-drava-saṁnyutam  
pibata bhāgavatāṁ rasam ā-layaṁ  
muhur aho rasikā bhuvi bhāvukāḥ*

“O expert and thoughtful men, relish *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the mature fruit of the desire tree of Vedic literatures. It emanated from the lips of Sri Sukadeva Goswami. Therefore this fruit has become even more tasteful, although its nectarean juice was already relishable for all, including liberated souls.” (*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 1.1.3)

Authorities like Suta Goswami testify to this truth from their own experience. Nonetheless, perfect devotees may feel inclined to listen to some parts of the *Bhāgavatam* more than others. The extraordinary Vaishnavas who have developed an unquenchable

### nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

thirst for the honey flowing directly from Sri Gopinatha’s lotus feet feel no attraction for hearing anything other than *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, just as even beginners in the process of devotional service no longer want to hear about *jñāna-yoga* and impersonal liberation, or as those striving for liberation lose interest in topics of material development and worldly pleasures. Every discussion in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in fact glorifies Krishna, the lover of the gopis. The self-realized Vaishnavas must be allowed their preferences, but neophyte devotees should not cheaply imitate them. Devotees not free from faults should strictly follow the complete course of the instructions of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, from the first chapter of Canto One through the last chapter of Canto Twelve. By repeated systematic study of the entire *Bhāgavatam* and its authorized explanations, devotees can aspire to gradually become fit to taste the immortal nectar hidden within it.

—*Bṛihad Bhagavatamṛta* 1.1.21-23,

Translated by Gopiparandhama Dasa

### DANGERS OF BAD ASSOCIATION

*Srila Bhakti Vinode Thakur*

**Vijaya:** “Maharaja, kindly explain how we can relish the nectar of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in the exalted company of those rasika devotees who are forever steeped within its divine rasa, the sixty-first limb?”

**Raghunatha dasa Babaji:** “The Vedas are a wish-fulfilling desire tree and the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is the deliciously ripened fruit of this desire tree. To savour this nectar is impossible in the company of those who do not have any actual taste for it. In fact, one becomes an offender, if one tries to do so. The sincere aspirant must find a pure devotee—one who is imbued with *rasa* and thirsty for hearing Krishna’s sublime pastimes—and in his association relish the succulent sweetness of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. In non-devotional assemblies and mundane social gatherings, a discussion upon and reading from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* will have a negative, or at best no effect, upon spiritual progress.”

**Vijaya:** “What is meant by associating with devotees who are peaceful, elevated, and have similar spiritual sentiments to oneself, the sixty-second limb?”

**Raghunatha dasa Babaji:** “One cannot advance spiritually if one associates with non-devotees, even if one rubber-stamps them as devotees. A sincere devotee always desires to enter and engage in the transcendental service of the eternal, supramundane pastimes of Sri Krishna. This is the hallmark of a true bhakta, devotee. Amongst the bhaktas, those who are more elevated than





oneself should be sought out, because association with them enhances one's own quality of bhakti. Otherwise, the growth of bhakti will be arrested and one will be gradually dragged down to the same level of the persons with whom one is associating. We are warned against this danger in the *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya*, 8.51:

*yasya yat-saṅgatiḥ puṁso maṇivat syāt sa tad-guṇaḥ  
sua-kulaṛddhye tato dhīmān sua-yuṭhāny eva saṁśrayet*

“A person gradually acquires the characteristics of the company he keeps, much like a gem stone which lends some of its own colour and sparkle to other substances in touch with it. Therefore, a person can become a pure devotee in the saintly association of devotees.”

— *Jaiva dharma*, Chapter 20, Part 8.

Translated by Śrīman Sarva-bhāvana dāsa

## THE SECRET OF LEARNING BHĀGAVATAM

*His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta*

*Swami Prabhupada*

One can certainly see directly the presence of Lord Sri Krishna in the pages of *Bhāgavatam* if one has heard it from a self-realized great soul like Sukadeva Goswami. One cannot, however, learn *Bhāgavatam* from a bogus hired reciter whose aim of life is to earn some money out of such recitation and employ the earning in sex indulgence. No one can learn *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* who is associated with persons engaged in sex life. That is the secret of learning *Bhāgavatam*. Nor can one learn *Bhāgavatam* from one who interprets the text by his mundane scholarship. One has to learn *Bhāgavatam* from the representative of Sukadeva Goswami, and no one else, if one at all wants to see Lord Sri Krishna in the pages. That is the process, and there is no alternative.

Suta Goswami is a bona fide representative

of Sukadeva Goswami because he wants to present the message which he received from the great learned brahmana. Sukadeva Goswami presented *Bhāgavatam* as he heard it from his great father, and so also Suta Goswami is presenting *Bhāgavatam* as he had heard it from Sukadeva Goswami. Simple hearing is not all; one must realize the text with proper attention. The word *niviṣṭa* means that Suta Goswami drank the juice of *Bhāgavatam* through his ears. That is the real process of receiving *Bhāgavatam*. One should hear with rapt attention from the real person, and then he can at once realize the presence of Lord Krishna in every page. The secret of knowing *Bhāgavatam* is mentioned here. No one can give rapt attention who is not pure in mind. No one can be pure in mind who is not pure in action. No one can be pure in action who is not pure in eating, sleeping, fearing and mating. But somehow or other if someone hears with rapt attention from the right person, at the very beginning one can assuredly see Lord Sri Krishna in person in the pages of *Bhāgavatam*.

— *Srīmad Bhagavatam* 1.3.44, Purport

## ONLY LISTENING TO THE BHĀGAVATAM WITH FULL ATTENTION WILL PRODUCE RESULTS

*Bhāgavata-māhātmya*

Even after an aspirant to spiritual life has attained the company of devotees and hears the *Bhāgavatam* in their association, he must still be careful to hear it in the proper manner. Otherwise he will not get the full result of this powerful devotional activity.

The instructive tale of Gokarna is found in the section of *Padma Purāṇa* known as “The Glories of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*” (*Bhāgavata-māhātmya*). Gokarna was the adopted son of the brahmin Atmadeva and his wife Dhundhuli. Dhundhuli and her husband also raised her sister's child Dhundhukari, who unfortunately was very wicked. Because of his sinful life, when Dhundhukari died he became a ghost and haunted his family's village. Out of compassion for his stepbrother, Gokarna recited the entire 12 cantos of the *Bhāgavatam* over a period of seven days and, when it was over, Dhundhukari was liberated from his ghostly body. Where he had previously been invisible, he suddenly appeared before the entire assembly of devotees in a wonderful form, described in the *Bhāgavata-māhātmya* as follows: “Dhundhukari manifested before them in a marvellous, beautiful deep blue-colored form, garlanded with tulasi leaves and wearing a yellow cloth, a jewelled crown, and earrings.” (*Bhāgavata-māhātmya* 5.51)

Dhundhukari prostrated himself before his

stepbrother and thanked him sincerely for having recited the entire *Bhāgavatam* for his benefit. As he was himself energetically glorifying the seven-day recital of the *Bhāgavatam*, a marvellous celestial carriage, attended by residents of the Vaikuntha world, descended into the midst of the assembly, brightening the surroundings with their effulgence. Before the eyes of the amazed spectators, Dhundhukari boarded the lustrous carriage. Before leaving, however, Gokarna asked the denizens of Vaikuntha the following important question:

“There were many people in the audience who were purified by listening to the *Bhāgavatam* recital. Why then were celestial carriages not brought for all of them? I observed them all participating equally in the act of hearing. Please explain, O beloved of Hari, why there is a difference in the results they have gotten?” (*Bhāgavata-māhātmya* 5.69-70)

The associates of the Lord answered by speaking : “The difference in results comes of the differences in the quality of their hearing. Everyone present, it is true, listened to the *Bhāgavatam*, but not everyone reflected on what they had heard. The difference in results came from this, as well as from the quality of their worship, O respectful one.” (*Bhāgavata-māhātmya* 5.71)

“The ghost listened for seven days, but each night he worshiped the Lord, during which time he reflected with concentration on what he had heard. Knowledge which is unstable is lost, as is the learning of someone who has been inattentive. Japa done without concentration or hearing advice which comes from a doubtful source are both wasted. A land without Vaishnavas is worthless, as is the offering of oblations by a person without qualifications, charity given to an unlearned person, and a family which has no ethical principles. In order to obtain the fruits of hearing the *Bhāgavatam*, one should have faith in the words of the spiritual master and an attitude of humility about his own worth; he should be victorious over the flaws of the mind and have unswerving concentration on the topics he is hearing.

“When all these people hear the *Bhāgavatam* a second time, they too will gain eternal residence in Vaikuntha, of this there is no doubt. As for you, Gokarna, Govinda will personally take you to Goloka, the abode of the cows”

After thus speaking to Gokarna, the associates of Lord Hari began to loudly sing the Lord’s names, ascending to Vaikuntha with the transformed Dhundhukari. In the following month

of *Śrāvaṇa*, Gokarna undertook a second *Bhāgavata-saptāha*. The same audience was again present, but this time they listened more carefully than they had previously. At the end of the week, there was the most wonderful epiphany. Sri Hari Himself descended into the assembly, surrounded by innumerable associates in innumerable celestial carriages. The sounds of prayer and glorification resounded in every direction. Even Lord Hari Himself added to the auspicious cacophony by blowing the conch Pancajanya, which He always holds in His hand. The Lord then embraced Gokarna tightly, transforming the devotee, who took the dark form of a Vaikuntha resident with four arms, yellow silk dress, and jewelled crown and earrings. Instantly, everyone in the assembly was similarly transformed. Even other creatures, and lower-caste residents of the village were also transformed into divine beings and, as a result of Gokarna’s mercy, were given places in the celestial carriages and taken to the transcendental abode sought after by the great yogis. The Lord of the cows, Gopala, took Gokarna, His dearmost devotee, with Him to His own abode of Goloka.

One may perform penances for many lifetimes and not obtain residence in Goloka-Vaikuntha—the fruit of listening to the *Bhāgavatam* for a single week. Just as all the citizens of Ayodhya were taken by Ramacandra to Saketa in Vaikuntha, by the Lord’s mercy, anyone who listens to the *Bhāgavatam* will be taken to His transcendental abode, for the mercy of Sri Krishna is present in the account of His pastimes found therein. One who recites the *Bhāgavatam* as well as those who listen to it will have the great fortune of obtaining this divine reward..

— An excerpt from Chapter 10, *Art of Sadhana* by Srila Bhakti Pramod Puri Maharaja ॐ

## GLORIES OF SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM

Conversation between

Lord Chaitanya & Devananda Pandit

The brahmana Devananda Pandita folded his hands and began to offer prayers. “You are most merciful. You have appeared in Navadvipa to deliver the people of the entire universe. “I could not recognize You because I am sinful and unfortunate. I was therefore deprived of the opportunity to relish transcendental happiness in Your association. You are by nature compassionate to all living entities. I beg that I may have attachment for You. O Lord, I have one request at Your lotus feet. Please instruct me. I am an ignorant person yet I teach *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, which is a book meant for the most intelligent persons. How should I explain it, and what should I teach? O Lord, kindly instruct me.

On hearing Devananda's words, Lord Gauracandra began to quote evidence from *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. "Listen, O brahmana, while teaching *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* you should not explain anything other than devotional service. "In the beginning, middle, and end of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* devotional service to Vishnu is described as eternally perfect, inexhaustible, and infallible. Devotional service to Vishnu is the only truth throughout the innumerable universes. It remains fully potent even during the universal devastation. Narayana awards liberation but hides devotional service. One cannot attain devotional service without Krishna's mercy. Because *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* glorifies devotional service, there is no literature equal to it. As the various incarnations of the Lord headed by Matsya and Kurma appear and disappear, the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, which is not composed by man, appears and disappears by its own sweet will.

Simply by the mercy of Krishna and the devotion of Vyasa, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* manifested from the tongue of Vyasa. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is an eternal literature. Even when it is lost in the course of time, by the Lord's mercy it again appears on the tongue and from the writing of Sri Vyasa. This literature is incomprehensible to those mortal beings who are punished by Yamaraja.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is as incomprehensible as the science of the Supreme Lord. This is the statement of all scriptures. One who thinks, 'I understand *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*,' does not know the glories of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. One who is qualified for *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* knows that *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is certainly the crest jewel of all scriptures. If even foolish people take shelter of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* manifests in their hearts. The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is filled with ecstatic love. It is the body of Lord Krishna. All confidential pastimes of Krishna are described in it. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, which is filled with ecstatic love, is known as a form of Sri Krishna. "After compiling the Vedic literatures and the Puranas, Vedavyasa did not feel satisfied. "But as soon as *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* manifested on his tongue, his heart was filled with joy.

In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (1.7.4-7) it is stated:

*bhakti-yogena manasi samyak prañihite 'male  
apaśyat puruṣaṁ pūrṇaṁ māyāṁ ca tad-apāśrayam  
jayā sammohito jīva ātmānaṁ tri-guṇātmakam  
paro 'pi mamute 'narthāṁ tat-kṛtāṁ cābhipadyate  
anarthopaśamaṁ sākṣād bhakti-yogam adhokṣaje  
lokasyājānato vidvāṁś cakre sātva-ta-saṁhitām  
yasyāṁ vai śrūyamāṇāyāṁ kṛṣṇe parama-pūruṣe  
bhaktir utpadyate puṁsaḥ śoka-moha-bhayāpahā*

"Thus he fixed his mind, perfectly engaging it by linking it in devotional service [bhakti-yoga] without any tinge of materialism, and thus he saw the Absolute Personality of Godhead along with His external energy, which was under full control. Due to this external energy, the living entity, although transcendental to the three modes of material nature, thinks of himself as a material product and thus undergoes the reactions of material miseries. The material miseries of the living entity, which are superfluous to him, can be directly mitigated by the linking process of devotional service. But the mass of people does not know this, and therefore the learned Vyasa-deva compiled this Vedic literature, which is in relation to the Supreme Truth. Simply by giving aural reception to this Vedic literature, the feeling for loving devotional service to Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, sprouts up at once to extinguish the fire of lamentation, illusion, and fearfulness."

*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is not a literature intended for Mayavadis and karmis. There is nothing other than devotional service in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. If one understands this, one can attain transcendental peace at heart. "O brahmana, listen sincerely. I tell you that some people even become perplexed after reading such a literature. You should explain devotional service in the beginning, middle, and end of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. "Then you will no longer commit any offense, and you will immediately become joyful at heart. "All the scriptures glorify devotional service to Krishna. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is especially filled with the mellows of devotional service to Krishna. In the *Hari-vamśa* (*Bhaviṣyat-parva* 132.95) it is stated:

*vede rāmāyaṇe caiva purāṇe bhārata  
tathā ādāv ante ca madhye ca hariḥ sarvatra gīyate*

"In the Vedic literature, including the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Purāṇas*, and *Mahābhārata*, from the very beginning (*ādau*) to the end (*ante ca*), as well as within the middle (*madhye ca*), only Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is explained." Go and teach *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* by explaining the nectarean devotional service of Krishna."

After hearing the Lord's instructions, Devananda Pandit offered his full obeisances and considered himself fortunate. After offering the Lord repeated obeisances, he meditated on the lotus feet of the Lord with full concentration as he departed. In this way Lord Gaurasundara revealed the glories of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* to everyone.

—Chaitanya Bhagavata, Antya lila, 497- 526